

DIGITAL GAMES AT FALMOUTH

WELCOME TO BA(HONS) DIGITAL GAMES AT FALMOUTH.

Your offer

Please remember that if you have been made a conditional offer to study at Falmouth, your place is subject to meeting those conditions. Conditional means that we are waiting to receive your results, or some more information, before your place is finalised. You can see any conditions in [UCAS Track](#). If you have any questions, please contact Louise Hearle on 01326 01326 213784 or louise.hearle@falmouth.ac.uk

First week of term

Your first day of attendance will be **Monday 14 September 2015**. Please report for your welcome talk at **9.30am** in the **Games Studio Teaching Room** in the **Media Centre** on the **Penryn Campus**.

Between the Games course, the University and the Students Union we have a full and exciting first week planned out for you all, which we will explain at this meeting. Induction week will include some fun activities, as well as some more important introductions to your new career as a Falmouth games student. This is the beginning of an exciting course and new approach to games at university, and we can't wait to start making games with you.

MyTimetable

<https://mytimetable.falmouth.ac.uk/> available from 1 September 2015

This is the link to MyTimetable, your online academic calendar which shows all scheduled learning activities and your course timetable. It will be available from 1 September 2015, however, timetables can be subject to change. To keep up to date, we recommend that you export the feed to your chosen device (mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop). An induction will be offered on the use of MyTimetable during freshers' week. Students will have access to their individual student timetables, where appropriate, once they have completed their online enrolment and IT induction.

At this stage many students want to know what we'd recommend they do to be properly prepared for the course in September. The primary tool we will be using for game-making is Unity. **Regardless of which route you are on in the course, you should download and begin to familiarise yourself with this software as soon as you can.** It's free and the tutorials are located at <http://unity3d.com/learn/tutorials/modules>

We'll be expecting students to have undertaken several of the beginner level Unity tutorials in order to hit the ground running with the software in September.

If you're wondering how else to best use your summer to prepare for when you arrive, here are some tips divided up by the different routes through the course.

Art - Studio creative director Professor Tanya Krzywinska suggests that you do lots of drawing over the summer – both of characters and landscapes/environment studies. It's important to start getting used to drawing/painting in art software like Painter or Sketchbook Pro. Also, it would be beneficial to download the free trial of Autodesk Maya and work through its tutorials.

Animation - Download Autodesk Maya and work through its tutorials, with an emphasis on the animation section.

Programming - The studio's technical director, Martin Cooke, suggests that in addition to the Unity tutorials recommended for all routes (see above), you check out the scripting section at unity3d.com/learn/tutorials/modules/beginner/scripting Getting a head start on C# scripting will be helpful, but don't worry if it's a bit too much, we will be covering it all from the ground up.

Writing - Play text-heavy games like the *Dragon Age* series, looking for how that text is structured to work in games. Play games with strong stories but no text at all, like Thatgamecompany's *Journey*, and consider how they tell their story. Play games which are made of text, like Porpentine's *Howling Dogs* or *100 Feet Up The Ruin Wall* (easily found with Google) and see how they use text to create gameplay. Do not neglect learning to use Unity as well as you will need it to put narrative into games when you can't use text.

Audio - The music department recommend that those of you planning on taking the more technical modules read the following:

Izhaki, R., 2008. *Mixing Audio: Concepts, Practices and Tools*. Focal Press

Miller, P.D., 2008. *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture*. MIT Press

While the more performance or composition focused students read:

Taylor, E., 1989. *The AB Guide to Music Theory*. Oxford University Press

Harper-Scott, J.P.E., 2009. *An Introduction to Music Studies*. Cambridge University Press

Cook, N., 2000. *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press

Design – Studio director of enterprise and design Rich Barham recommends the following: During this summer, start playing games from genres which aren't within your normal interest, for example: If you're into fighting games, play FPS, if you love MMO's, try RPGs. You don't need to spend money to do this! Grab free mobile games, free to play games and trials on Steam. Broaden your horizons. Also, try to play some of the more modern board games; I personally recommend Fantasy Flight games as a supplier but there are many of the new generation of board games which incorporate excellent design and interesting mechanics.

Board games are an excellent medium for exploring design too, so don't miss out on getting plenty of time with both physical and digital games to help prepare. Finally, remember you'll spend much of your first year learning to start thinking as a designer, getting a broader base of experience will help you make that transition from player to designer far more easily.

A good book for designers to take a look at is:

Fullerton, T., 2004. *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games*. CRC Press

All Routes

Since we'll be studying games and the theory of games studies as well as making them, I'd recommend that you obtain and read these two books:

King, G. and Krzywinska, T., 2005. *Tomb Raiders and Space Invaders*. IB Taurus

Suits, B., 1978. *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*. Broadview Press

Also, this one is worth buying and dipping into (since there's a lot of material there!):

Salen, K. and Zimmerman, E., 2003. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press

If you want to use your own desktop computer or laptop on the course, I've attached some guidance from our studio technician and some example computer specifications. We recommend PCs over Macs for all students except for the Audio Route, which uses Mac-specific software.

Computer buying advice

Firstly, a couple of caveats:

- It's possible to develop games on most computer systems that have been made in the last ten years and furthermore high spec development PCs will be provided in the University's digital games studio, so there is no requirement for you to bring new or expensive computer systems with you when you join the course. However, we anticipate that some students will want to purchase a new computer to see them through university and may like some advice on this matter from a game developer's perspective
- Please note that although every effort has been made to ensure the described computer systems are appropriately configured, these systems have not been tested by any member of the team and the University can accept no liability for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of the information provided. If you are unsure about any aspect of your purchase then please contact the retailer. Now, on to the hardware:

Graphics Card

Arguably, the most important hardware consideration for a game development system is the graphics card, especially if you intend to work with detailed 3D graphics that are rendered in real-time. For the example computers listed below we have noted corresponding 'average G3D benchmark' scores as taken from

videocardbenchmark.net at the time of writing. This website considers 'high end video cards' to have a score of 824 or above.

Laptop or Desktop?

Laptops obviously have the advantage of being portable. In other regards you will typically get a higher spec system when spending an equivalent amount on a desktop instead of a laptop. Desktops also tend to have better air-flow and cooling so less stress is put on the components when running for long periods which can in turn help to improve the life span of the system.

Hard Drive

Depending on whether your preference is for fast load times or extra storage space (digital downloads, films, music, etc.) you might want to consider either a SSD hard drive (speed) or a larger 'regular' hard drive (storage). Some developers like to use an internal SSD hard drive for system speed and also have a larger external/portable hard drive for storing or transferring other documents.

Display Size

When working with game development tools you will often be running multiple programs which each have numerous smaller views and panels so you will quickly realise the benefit of having a lot of 'screen estate' ie the more pixels the better. With laptops this can represent a trade-off between portability and weight vs usable display area. Whether you use a laptop or a desktop it's certainly worth considering a full HD display (ie 1920 x 1080 resolution) and perhaps a secondary monitor as well.

In the following list we've tried to cover a range of options and budgets, but the list is by no means exhaustive; we advise that you shop around a little and pick something that you're comfortable with.

Example Computers

Basic spec gaming PC:

Orion I3 450 PC - <http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/view/Orion-i3-450-pc/>

Configured with the following add-ons:

- Graphics Card: 2GB AMD Radeon R7 250
- Monitor: ASUS VE228TR 21.5"
- Keyboard: PCS S300 USB Keyboard
- Mouse: PCS S300 USB Mouse

Videocard Benchmark: 1412

Total Cost: £569

High spec gaming PC:

Vortex 1250 Gaming PC - <http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk/view/Vortex-1250-gaming-pc/>

Configured with the following add-ons:

- Monitor 1: IIYAMA E2273HDS 22"
- Monitor 2: IIYAMA E2273HDS 22"
- Keyboard & Mouse: CM Storm Devastator Keyboard and Mouse

(NB this graphics card has 1 DVI, 1 mHDMI & 3 mDP outputs; so be sure to purchase appropriate cables for connecting two monitors – check with a PC Specialist first if you buy this system.)

Videocard Benchmark: 8635

Total Cost: £1485

Basic spec gaming laptop:

Lenovo Z50 (15.6", full HD, Intel i7, 8GB Ram, 1TB SSHD, Nvidia GT840M)

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Lenovo-15-6-inch-Full-HD-i7-4510U-Bluetooth/dp/B00LLE6S8M>

(NB if you compare prices at different retailers, be aware that there are different versions of the Lenovo Z50 laptop – be sure to select one with an appropriate graphics card such as the Nvidia GT840M above.)

Videocard Benchmark: 839

Total Cost: £600

High spec gaming laptop:

Asus G750JS Gaming Laptop (Full HD, Intel i7, 12GB Ram, 256GB SSD + 750Gb HDD, Nvidia GTX870M)

<http://www.ebuyer.com/620646-asus-g750js-gaming-laptop-g750js-t4069h>

Videocard Benchmark: 2318

Total Cost: £1150

If you have any questions regarding your place or the process of getting started as a student at Falmouth, please contact Admissions by emailing chloe.hutton@falmouth.ac.uk or calling 01326 213786.

Finally, if you've not done so yet, please feel free to add me on Facebook (facebook.com/falmouthgames) and I can then add you to the course's Facebook group where we can all start getting to know each other and you can also meet current students, as well as the other tutors.

The digital games mentors (current students who are looking to help new students get started and settled in) will contact you over the coming weeks about their dedicated Facebook group where you can read course FAQs and ask questions.

You'll be emailed further details of the course and other important information prior to the start date. If you will be away, please ask someone else to check your emails regularly and reply on your behalf.

I look forward to seeing you soon, please do email me with any questions or queries at douglas.brown@falmouth.ac.uk

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